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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001369

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL KDEM VE

SUBJECT: CODEL NELSON: GOV REACTIONS TO PRESS STATEMENTS

CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ABELARDO A. ARIAS FOR
REASONS 1.4 (D)

¶1. (U) GOV OFFICIALS REACTED STRONGLY TO REMARKS MADE BY SENATOR BILL NELSON (D-FL) TO THE MIAMI HERALD ON APRIL 18TH. IN THE INTERVIEW SENATOR NELSON HAD NOTED THAT THE U.S. KNEW THAT THE GOV WAS AIDING THE FARC, WAS FAILING TO CONTROL A BLACK MARKET IN VENEZUELAN PASSPORTS, AND WAS INTERFERING WITH VENEZUELAN'S CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO CONVOKE A RECALL REFERENDUM. HE DECLARED THAT THE TIME MAY COME WHEN VENEZUELA MAY HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED HOSTILE TO U.S. INTERESTS.

¶2. (U) VICE-PRESIDENT JOSE VICENTE RANGEL SAID THAT MANY "CONCEITED" SENATORS COME TO VENEZUELA AS "TOURISTS", AND THEN SAY "SILLY THINGS" ABOUT VENEZUELA. HE SAID HE WOULD ASK FOR FUTURE OFFICIAL VISITORS TO PASS A LIE-DETECTOR EXAM. "WE HAVE NOTHING AGAINST THE NORTH AMERICAN PEOPLE. WE WANT TO HAVE SMOOTH, DEMOCRATIC, RESPECTFUL, CIVILIZED RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, BUT THERE IS A GROUP OF NORTH AMERICAN LEADERS, MEMBERS OF THE SENATE, WHO ARE EXTREMELY IMPERTINENT AND WHEN THEY COME HERE THEY DO WHAT NELSON DID."

¶3. (U) NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NA) DEPUTY TAREK WILLIAM SAAB, PRESIDENT OF THE NA FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE COMPLAINED, "NELSON GIVES ME THE IMPRESSION THAT HE IS A BLABBERMOUTH, WHO ARRIVES IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY AND THEN, AFTER A SUPERFICIAL VISIT, LODGED IN A 5-STAR HOTEL, HAS THE RIGHT TO INSULT US." SAAB SAID NELSON'S COMMENTS DEMONSTRATED "THE GROSS INTERFERENCE OF THE UNITED STATES IN OUR COUNTRY." THE PRO-CHAVEZ LEGISLATOR SAID, "IT IS THE PRODUCT OF DESPERATION TO SEND A SENATOR TO VENEZUELA TO SAY ANY NUMBER OF IDIOCIES AND THEN PUBLISH THEM IN THE PRESS ... BUT AT THE SAME TIME IT SHOWS THAT WE ARE CORRECT TO THINK THAT THE U.S. HASN'T STOPPED PROMOTING DESTABILIZING AND CONSPIRATORIAL ACTIONS AGAINST VENEZUELA."

¶4. (U) REFERRING TO THE SENATOR'S COMMENTS REGARDING LINKS TO COLOMBIA'S FARC, THE MFA DECLARED THAT THE REAL DOCUMENTS REGARDING TERRORISM SUPPORT WERE THOSE IN POSSESSION OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT WHICH "ADMIT THE FINANCING BY THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION OF TERRORISTS, COUP-MONGERS, AND FASCISTS WHO HAVE ATTACKED VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY" (REFERS TO FOIA DOCUMENTS ON NED FINANCING OF PRO-DEMOCRACY GROUPS). THE MFA GOES ON SARCASTICALLY TO ATTACK THE RELIABILITY OF U.S. INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES, WHICH WERE "THE SAME ONES WHICH EFFICIENTLY DETECTED THE MORTAL ATTACK AGAINST THE TWIN TOWERS IN NEW YORK AND WERE THE SAME ONES THAT INVENTED THE FANTASIES ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF WMD IN IRAQ."

COMMENT

¶5. (C) THE GOV WAS STUNG BY THE SENATOR'S FRANKNESS -- ERGO THEIR SHARP, INTEMPERATE REPLY. THE GOV IS EMBARRASSED, SINCE IT HAD ANTICIPATED THAT SENIOR U.S. DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADERS WOULD BE MORE AMENABLE TO THE GOV -- AND THEY WERE PROVEN WRONG. FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER CHADERTON TOLD THE AMBASSADOR ON APRIL 22 THAT VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON ALVAREZ HAD BEEN OVERCONFIDENT IN HIS DEALINGS WITH SENATOR NELSON.

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